

October 12, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

After thorough research and deliberation, I am writing to announce Community LIFT's decision to withdraw our partnership from Operation Safe Community. We strongly oppose your decision to hire Mr. Raymond Kelly as a consultant and your pursuit of any related strategy recommendations. Please immediately remove Community LIFT from your website and discontinue any listing of the organization in or on any future communications.

We join more than 400 hundred other petitioners in requesting that the City and the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission find a sounder and just response to crime, one that recognizes the economic and social disadvantages which a substantial portion of its residence face. Although crime is connected to poverty, poverty should not be treated as a crime. Instead, we ask that the City and the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission focus on developing short and mid-term strategies that include place-based, problem-oriented policing and interventions. In addition, we echo petitioners in their call to address crime long term through focus on solving the economic and social disadvantages that are at the root of nearly all crimes committed. Lastly, we agree that a restorative social justice lens is required instead of a punitive, racially inequitable one that will further damage our community and community-police relations. The belief that MPD and OSC would pursue these alternative strategies in collaboration with its network of community partners is what initially inspired us to become a partnering member.

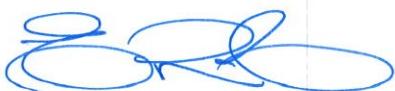
There have been statements in the media to assure the public that stop-and-frisk has not been discussed. Since a U.S. federal court ruled stop-and-frisk practices illegal, to say that OSC or MPD is not considering stop-and-frisk falls far short of our expectations of the morality and efficacy of strategies to reduce Memphis' unacceptable crime rate. It should go without saying that you would not consider adopting unconstitutional practices. But it does call into question why you would hire the nation's foremost proponent of such illegal practices to advise us. This hire reflects a deafness to the many voices across this city and country that call for justice and equal treatment under the law.

Mr. Kelly has argued for decades that the controversial "broken windows" theory on which his policing strategies are based are inextricably linked to NYC's reduction in crime. Thus, taking stop-and-frisk out of consideration does not resolve our grave concern about the theoretical framework that appears to inform Mr. Kelly's policing strategies. Whatever success in reducing homicides Mr. Kelly has attributed to his broken windows tactics is not proven in recent studies. Homicides in NYC decreased before Kelly took office in 2002 and continued to decline after the use of stop-and-frisk significantly decreased in 2013. Tactics like stop-and-frisk have been proven to disproportionately target segments of the local population at the police officer's judgement, with an over-reliance on petty policing tactics, resulting in 1 arrest for every 9 stops. Consider the implications of any tactics that Mr. Kelly proposes that can also be deployed at police officers' judgment in a city that has a super majority of black and brown citizens. Your selection of Mr. Kelly as an advisor is an express openness to these strategies that over-criminalize our youth, our black and Latino males, and our most economically vulnerable- by and large the same Memphians that Community LIFT seeks to enfranchise every day.

It appears OSC's new direction runs directly against Community LIFT's guiding values and principles for equitable community and economic development, principles that should inform our approach to reversing record-breaking crime rates. Memphis could be on a long overdue path toward racial healing and unity. Your hiring the architect of programs that have been proven to be ineffective, and in fact harmful to vulnerable communities, implies endorsement of such tactics and sends the message to our diverse community that you are not willing to join us on that path.

I trust that you will give Community LIFT's resignation from the partnership and our appeal for an alternative approach thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,



Eric Robertson